

Southern Appalachian Creature Feature Podcasts

Smoky Mountain Firewood

Greetings and welcome to the Southern Appalachian Creature Feature.

Officials at Great Smoky Mountains National Park are proposing to help protect park forests by further limiting the type of firewood brought into the park.

Non-native, tree-killing insects and diseases can be unknowingly introduced into the park through firewood transported from infested areas. The park proposes reducing this threat by changing park rules to allow only heat-treated wood to be brought into the park for campground fires. The proposed change would ban the importation of firewood not bundled and certified by the USDA or a state agency. Heat-treated wood will be available to purchase from concessioners in many of the campgrounds as well as from private businesses in the communities around the park. Visitors could still collect dead and down wood in the park for campfires.

A variety of destructive pests lay eggs or stowaway in firewood. Movement of firewood has been implicated in the spread of gypsy moth, Dutch elm disease, emerald ash borer, thousand canker disease, Asian longhorned beetle, and other native and non-native insect and disease complexes.

Although the proposed rule wouldn't take effect until 2015, the park is asking visitors to make the switch to safe firewood now. Heat-treated wood is available from an increasing number of businesses outside the park and staff are working with concessioners within the park to use low-risk wood sources until they're able to make the transition.

A final decision on the proposed regulation is expected by the end of the year.

For WNCW and the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, this is Gary Peeples.